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Nominations

The Senate confirmed the nomination of economic adviser Martin Feldstein Wednesday but sidetracked several other top nominees, including a State

Department official accused of acting "in defiance of espionage laws."

Also confirmed were Donald Hodel as secretary of energy, Martha Hesse as an assistant energy secretary and Henry Folsom as a commissioner of the Postal Rate Commission.

President Reagan withdrew eight nominees to the Legal Services Corp. board of directors because of liberal opposition to two of them.

Senate Republican leader Howard Baker laid aside the most controversial nominee, former New York Times reporter Richard Burt as assistant secretary of state for European affairs, saying "it appears unlikely" he would be approved.

A Foreign Relations Committee source said Burt's nomination, although not dead, "is barely breathing."

The nomination of Burt, who has served in an acting capacity since September, was considered a test of Secretary of State George Shultz' influence.

Helms, threatening to filibuster and to ask the Senate to meet in secret session, said Burt wrote a story in 1979 compromising "top secret" information about a U.S. spy satellite.

Burt committed a "prima facie" violation of the law by receiving and writing classified information, Helms said.

But Sen. Charles Mathias, R-Md., said the story may have been the result of "an executive leak," which he called "a recognized tool of government."

"I concede he felt he had a right or a duty to print the story," Helms said. "But in so acting, Mr. Burt placed himself in a category ... that ought to disqualify him for ... high office. He acted as a journalist in defiance of espionage laws."

Helms said that if Burt is approved, "We can safely open up every safe in the CIA to Soviet espionage."

In apparent retaliation, liberals then blocked the nomination of former Helms aide Richard McCormack as assistant secretary of state for economic affairs. But the committee source said Reagan may resubmit the nomination in January.

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